

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-20. (Canceled).

Claims 21-29 (Withdrawn).

Claim 30. (Currently amended): A shaft sealing apparatus, comprising:

a vacuum casing formed with a vacuum chamber and having a base portion formed with an opening to have said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing held in communication with the atmosphere through said opening of said vacuum casing;

a shaft housing in the form of a cylindrical hollow shape and fixedly connected with said base portion of said vacuum casing, said shaft housing having an inner cylindrical surface;

a sleeve shaft in the form of a cylindrical hollow shape and received in said shaft housing to be movably supported by said shaft housing, said sleeve shaft held in coaxial alignment with said shaft housing and having a first axial end extending in said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, a second axial end extending in the atmosphere, an outer cylindrical surface smaller in diameter than said inner cylindrical surface of said shaft housing, and an inner cylindrical surface;

a center shaft in the form of a cylindrical shape and received in said sleeve shaft to be movably supported by said sleeve shaft, said center shaft held in coaxial alignment with said sleeve shaft and having a first axial end extending in said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, a second axial end extending in the atmosphere, and an outer cylindrical surface smaller in diameter than said inner cylindrical surface of said sleeve shaft;

a first sealing unit fixedly supported by said sleeve shaft, said first sealing unit including a retaining member in the form of an annular ring shape and fixedly supported by said sleeve shaft, and a sealing ring in the form of an annular ring shape and securely retained by said retaining member of said first sealing unit, said sealing ring of said first sealing unit intervening between said center shaft and said retaining member of said first sealing unit to hermetically seal the gap between said center shaft and said retaining member of said first

sealing unit, said sealing ring of said first sealing unit including an annular resilient member formed with an annular groove, and an annular spring member received in said annular groove of said annular resilient member and retained by said annular resilient member, said annular resilient member of said sealing ring having a peripheral portion securely retained by said retaining member, and a sealing lip integrally formed with said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member and radially inwardly extending from said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member to be held in contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said center shaft, said annular spring member of said sealing ring operative to impart a force to said sealing lip of said annular resilient member to ensure that said sealing lip of said annular resilient member is held in tight contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said center shaft; and

a second sealing unit fixedly supported by said base portion of said vacuum casing, said second sealing unit including a retaining member in the form of an annular ring shape and fixedly supported by said base portion of said vacuum casing, and a sealing ring in the form of an annular ring shape and securely retained by said retaining member of said second sealing unit, said sealing ring of said second sealing unit intervening between said sleeve shaft and said retaining member of said second sealing unit to hermetically seal the gap between said sleeve shaft and said retaining member of said second sealing unit, said sealing ring of said second sealing unit including an annular resilient member formed with an annular groove, and an annular spring member received in said annular groove of said annular resilient member and retained by said annular resilient member, said annular resilient member of said sealing ring having a peripheral portion securely retained by said retaining member, and a sealing lip integrally formed with said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member and radially inwardly extending from said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member to be held in contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said sleeve shaft, said annular spring member of said sealing ring operative to impart a force to said sealing lip of said annular resilient member to ensure that said sealing lip of said annular resilient member is held in tight contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said sleeve shaft_{[[.]]},

a first labyrinth seal unit intervening between said sleeve shaft and said center shaft to

be exposed to said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, and

a second labyrinth seal unit intervening between said vacuum casing and said sleeve shaft to be exposed to said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, said first labyrinth seal unit including an outer ring member provided on said first axial end of said sleeve shaft, and an inner ring member provided on said first axial end of said center shaft, said outer and inner ring members of said first labyrinth seal unit collectively forming an interstice therebetween, said second labyrinth seal unit including an outer ring member provided on said base portion of said vacuum casing, and an inner ring member provided on said first axial end of said sleeve shaft, said outer and inner ring members of said second labyrinth seal unit collectively forming an interstice therebetween.

Claim 31. (Canceled):

Claim 32. (Currently amended): A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim [[31]] 30, which further comprises a base member in the form of a circular shape and provided on said first axial end of said center shaft, a first fixed member in the form of an annular ring shape and provided on said first axial end of said sleeve shaft, and a second fixed member in the form of an annular ring shape and provided on said base portion of said vacuum casing, said base member and said first fixed member collectively constituting said first labyrinth seal unit, said first and second fixed members collectively constituting said second labyrinth seal unit.

Claim 33. (Previously added): A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim 30, which further comprises a base member in the form of a circular shape and provided on said first axial end of said center shaft, a first fixed member in the form of an annular ring shape and provided on said first axial end of said sleeve shaft, and a second fixed member in the form of an annular ring shape and provided on said base portion of said vacuum casing, said base member and said first fixed member collectively constituting said first labyrinth seal unit, said first and second fixed members collectively constituting said second labyrinth seal unit.

Claim 34. (Previously added): A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim 30, in which said sleeve shaft is rotatable around its own axis with respect to said shaft housing.

Claim 35. (Previously added); A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim 30, in which said center shaft is rotatable around its own axis with respect to said sleeve shaft.

Claim 36. (Previously added): A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim 30, in which said center shaft is axially movable along its own axis with respect to said sleeve shaft.

Claim 37. (New): A shaft sealing apparatus, comprising:

- a vacuum casing formed with a vacuum chamber and having a base portion formed with an opening to have said vacuum chamber held in communication with the atmosphere therethrough;

- a driving shaft having an outer cylindrical surface and movably extending in said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing through said opening of said vacuum casing;

- a sealing unit including a plurality of sealing rings each in the form of an annular ring shape and an annular retaining member fixedly connected with said base portion of said vacuum casing and securely retaining said peripheral portion of said sealing rings, each of sealing rings having a sealing lip held in contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said driving shaft, an annular spring member operative to impart a force to said sealing lip to ensure that said sealing lip is held in tight contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said driving shaft, and a peripheral portion radially outwardly extending from said sealing lip, and

- a labyrinth seal unit intervening between said annular retaining member and said driving shaft to be exposed to said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, said labyrinth seal unit including an outer ring member provided on said annular retaining member, and an inner ring member provided on said driving shaft, said outer and inner ring members of said labyrinth seal unit collectively forming an interstice therebetween.

Claim 38. (New): A shaft sealing apparatus as set forth in claim 37, in which said plurality of sealing rings are retained to be held in axially spaced-apart relationship with each other in said annular retaining member.

Claim 39. (New): A shaft sealing apparatus, comprising:

- a vacuum casing formed with a vacuum chamber and having a base portion formed with an opening to have said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing held in communication with the atmosphere through said opening of said vacuum casing;

a shaft housing in the form of a cylindrical hollow shape and fixedly connected with said base portion of said vacuum casing, said shaft housing having an inner cylindrical surface;

a driving shaft in the form of a cylindrical shape and received in said shaft housing to be movably supported by said shaft housing, said driving shaft held in coaxial alignment with said shaft housing and having a first axial end extending in said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, a second axial end extending in the atmosphere, and an outer cylindrical surface smaller in diameter than said inner cylindrical surface of said shaft housing;

a sealing unit received in said opening of said vacuum casing and fixedly supported by said base portion of said vacuum casing, said sealing unit including a retaining member in the form of an annular ring shape and fixedly connected with said base portion of said vacuum casing, and a sealing ring in the form of an annular ring shape and securely retained by said retaining member of said sealing unit, said sealing ring of said sealing unit intervening between said driving shaft and said retaining member of said sealing unit to hermetically seal the gap between said driving shaft and said retaining member of said sealing unit, said sealing ring of said sealing unit including an annular resilient member formed with an annular groove, and an annular spring member received in said annular groove of said annular resilient member and retained by said annular resilient member, said annular resilient member of said sealing ring having a peripheral portion securely retained by said retaining member, and a sealing lip integrally formed with said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member and radially inwardly extending from said peripheral portion of said annular resilient member to be held in contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said driving shaft, said annular spring member of said sealing ring operative to impart a force to said sealing lip of said annular resilient member to ensure that said sealing lip of said annular resilient member is held in tight contact with said outer cylindrical surface of said driving shaft; and

a labyrinth seal unit intervening between said retaining member of said sealing unit and said driving shaft to be exposed to said vacuum chamber of said vacuum casing, said labyrinth seal unit including an outer ring member provided on said retaining member and an inner ring member provided on said driving shaft, said outer and inner ring members of said

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labyrinth seal unit collectively forming an interstice therebetween.